

DIGITAL REPRESENTATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE SITES: A GAME APPROACH

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The paper discusses digital approaches to the representation of cultural heritage embedded into the urban environment as well as methods of broadcasting and popularizing cultural heritage using game mechanics. As a solution, it is proposed to create a structured factual database and a mobile application with elements of gamification.

Introduction. Considerable number of contemporary projects for heritage conservation focus primarily on digitalization of the cultural sites and landscapes. This process entails the formation of a new mechanism of cultural heritage representation through its virtual images. The article focuses on digital representation of cultural memory encoded in city landscapes and historic locations.

Main part. The city along with its sites can be viewed as a cultural phenomenon of bipartite nature: on the one hand, it is a material environment, constituted of tangible objects with utilitarian functions; on the other hand, it is a virtual cultural space that is both product of the culture and the site for cultural production that is recorded in cultural memory and often embodied in textual form. The topoi or loci captured in the text can be viewed as a system of meaningful spatial images in the vast cultural and historical context. For example, such researchers as J. And A. Assman, Y. M. Lotman and others, note the ability of topoi to act as a mechanism for the preservation and transmission of cultural memory. Furthermore, V. N. Toporov views the city Saint Petersburg both as a text and as a mechanism for text production.

Digital technologies have great potential in cultural memory representation encoded in topoi. The virtual space of hypertext combined with a city map can become a medium that will unite topoi and loci, which are embodied in actual geospatial coordinates and materially incarnated in city locations. However, despite the variety of tools for creating annotated online maps, none of the currently existing solutions allows presenting a location in the context of its retrospective visualization and communication with other culturally significant objects, literary works, events and personalities.

In an attempt to rethink the above issues, the authors propose for consideration the project of a mobile application “Que.St”, developed on the basis of the International Center for Digital Humanities at ITMO University. This project is supported by ITMO University student’s grant and is being designed as an attempt to create a single full-scale multifunctional online platform that can become a field in which the topoi of St. Petersburg, expressed in the meta-text, is combined with city locations into a single cultural landscape. The goal of the project is to systematize unstructured humanitarian knowledge (big data) on the basis of links between historical and cultural toponyms, personalities and texts. An important part of the application and its main communication strategy is gamification. In addition to locations and routes, the application will include such ways of broadcasting information as storytelling, quest, interactive novel, as well as mechanics popular in computer games: experience points, collectibles and achievements.

Conclusion.

As we demonstrated in the case study discussed above, it is crucial to expand the discourses of cultural memory importance, as well as develop new approaches and techniques of making cultural heritage

data available to public. Transformation of the city could be seen and investigated retrospectively through the perspective of expanding these datasets and building up the infrastructure, which allows to encompass rich cultural history development metadata, flexible enough to fulfil it with various digital artefacts. New communicative approaches such as gamification can enrich user's experience in exploring cultural heritage of the city and increase user's engagement.

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